

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10  
NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 COME-00 EB-08 TRSE-00  
/056 W

-----019896 010055Z /14

R 310804Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1289

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3882

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TS

SUBJ: NEW PLANT GUARD CORPS (CORPS DE GARDIENS DES  
ENTREPRISES) IS ESTABLISHED

1. ALL TUNISIAN PAPERS MAY 26 CARRIED PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING  
CREATION OF NEW CORPS OF PLANT GUARDS (GARDIENS DES ENTRE-  
PRISES). FIRST CONTINGENT OF THESE PLANT GUARDS WAS  
INSTALLED MAY 25 AT BIR EL KASSAA SOGITEX PLANT NEAR TUNIS  
(SOGITEX IS STATE-OWNED TEXTILE GROUP.)

2. ANNOUNCEMENT NOTED THAT CONTINGENT WAS FORMALLY INSTALLED  
BY CAPTAIN MOHAMED SALAH HEDRI, "A HIGH OFFICER IN THE SURETE  
NATIONALE." IN HIS ADDRESS HE EXPLAINED THAT MISSION OF  
GUARDS IS TO PROTECT FACTORIES AGAINST "SABOTAGE, ACCIDENTS  
AND OTHER CALAMITIES." HE SPECIFIED THEY WOULD GUARD AGAINST  
"OUTSIDE DANGERS, THIEVES AND OTHER MARAUDERS," AS WELL  
AS GIVE ALARM IN CASE OF FIRE.

3. GUARDS WILL BE UNIFORMED AND HAVE "ADEQUATE EQUIPMENT."  
THEY WILL BE REGULAR EMPLOYEES OF PLANTS WHICH THEY ARE  
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CHARGED TO PROTECT, BUT WILL BE SELECTED AND TRAINED BY  
INTERIOR MINISTRY. ARTICLE CLOSING WITH STATEMENT THAT  
SUCH PLANT GUARDS "WHICH ARE FAMILIAR IN A NUMBER OF FOREIGN  
ENTERPRISES" ARE TO BE PLACED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY,  
EVIDENTLY BOTH IN STATE AND PRIVATELY OWNED FIRMS.

4. COMMENT. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT THIS NEW INITIATIVE

IS STRONGLY OPPOSED AT PLANT LEVEL, LARGELY BECAUSE OF CONCERN THAT GUARDS' RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE MORE TO DO WITH POLITICAL RATHER THAN PHYSICAL SECURITY, AND THAT THE SOGITEX BIR EL KASSAR PLANT, WHICH EMPLOYS APPROXIMATELY 2,700 WORKERS, WENT ON FOUR-DAY WILDCAT STRIKE IN MID-MAY IN OPPOSITION TO PLANT GUARD SCHEME. (STRIKE WAS "ILLEGAL" IN THAT IT WAS NOT AUTHORIZED BY UGTT EXECUTIVE BOARD.)

5. ALTHOUGH NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT HAS BEEN MADE, IT IS RUMORED THAT GUARD CONTINGENTS WILL BE STAFFED IN LARGE PART BY SAME PERSONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PSD VIGILANCE COMMITTEES (SERVICE D'ORDRE PUBLIQUE) WHICH WERE MOBILIZED IMMEDIATELY AFTER JANUARY DISTURBANCES. EVIDENCE AT HAND TENDS TO SUPPORT THIS THEORY. VIGILANCE COMMITTEES REPORTEDLY WERE DISBANDED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO AND PARTICIPANTS RETURNED TO THEIR PLACES OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT, MANY IN STATE-RUN INDUSTRY. WE KNOW FROM PARTY DIRECTOR SAYAH THAT THESE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, ALL STRONG DEFENDERS OF THE PARTY AND THE REGIME, CARRY SPECIAL DOCUMENTATION ISSUED BY THE INTERIOR MINISTRY.

6. THERE ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN TWO GROUPS HOWEVER. PLANT GUARDS APPARENTLY WILL BE IN THE FACTORIES ON PERMANENT AND INSTITUTIONALIZED BASIS. THEY WILL BE PAID BY THE FIRMS THEY ARE PROTECTING RATHER THAN THE PARTY, AND THEY WILL ENJOY A DIRECT GOT CONNECTION  
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THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR THAT DID NOT PREVIOUSLY EXIST.

7. IMPLICATION THAT EXISTING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS CANNOT CARRY OUT THEIR ASSIGNED SECURITY FUNCTIONS IS DISTURBING. ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITY ALWAYS EXISTS, WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY INCREASED SABOTAGE DANGER OR NEED FOR A NEW SECURITY STRUCTURE. THERE IS HARDLY A SMALL WORKSHOP IN TUNISIA THAT DOES NOT HAVE A NIGHT WATCHMAN, AND MOST LARGER ESTABLISHMENTS ALREADY HAVE THEIR OWN INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES. FURTHERMORE, POLICE IN TUNISIA ARE WELL ORGANIZED AND USUALLY CLOSE AT HAND TO ANY INDUSTRIAL AREA. WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY LAW OR ENFORCING REGULATION ESTABLISHING NEW PLANT GUARD CORPS AND WE SUSPECT CONCEPT CAN BE TRACED TO MINISTER OF DEFENSE FARHAT, WHO IS MORE OR LESS RUNNING INTERIOR MINISTRY AS WELL AS ARMY THESE DAYS. THE OUTSIDE DANGERS CITED AS JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS NEW INITIATIVE ARE NOT FURTHER EXPLAINED AND ONE WONDERS IF THE REAL THREAT IS NOT SEEN TO BE MORE INTERNAL THAN EXTERNAL. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHAT THE PARTY'S ROLE IS TO BE IN THIS NEW GUARD CORPS.  
MULCAHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SECURITY, ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICES, INDUSTRIAL PLANTS, BUSINESS FIRMS  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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